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STATE FOR WHA/BSC, INL/LP (JIM HIDES), AND EB/IFD/OIA
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR LAC/AA
STATE PASS TO USTR FOR LYANG
NSC FOR SUE CRONIN
TREASURY FOR OSIA MAUREEN WAFER
TREASURY FOR OTA WARFIELD, VAN KOCH, MILLAR
COMMERCE FOR ITA SARAH COOK
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: PARAGUAY POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC UPDATE, OCTOBER 21
- 27, 2006

1. SUMMARY:

- UN Debate on Development and Human Rights
- Global Infancia Holds Forum on Child Pornography
- Vote Count: A Long Night Ahead
- Export Potential
- Safety Awareness
- Cutting-Edge Code of Ethics

UN DEBATE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

1.2. (U) The United Nations Office in Paraguay held a debate October 24 at the National University in Asuncion (UNA). The panel-debate entitled, "Development, Security and Human Rights for Everyone," garnered more than 200 students, faculty and NGO representatives. Much of the lively discussion centered around how to speed up development, increase job creation and protect basic human rights. The leading panelists included Henry Jackelen, Resident Coordinator of the UN; Dr. Rodolfo Matarrollo, Deputy Secretary of Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the

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Argentine Secretariat of Human Rights, and two Paraguayan activists/professors.

GLOBAL INFANCIA FORUM ON CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

1.3. (U) Global Infancia, an international NGO, held a forum discussion entitled "The Prevention and Erradication of Child Pornography" October 25 at the Catholic University of Asuncion. Lourdes Barboza, former Secretariat of Children and Adolescents Minister, and Dr. Teresa Martinez, Director of the Trafficking in Persons, and Women and Children's Issues Office in the Attorney General's Office, led the discussion and answered questions regarding the Child Pornography law, which took effect in January 2006. PolOff queried the panelists about statistics on victims of child pornography but none are available. Martinez indicated, however, that there are currently 5 child pornography cases in judicial proceedings (NOTE: Each case involves between 10 and 30 children. END NOTE). Post will monitor the progress

of those cases.

VOTE COUNT: A LONG NIGHT AHEAD

¶4. (U) Paraguay's Elections Tribunal (TSJE) announced October 18 their methods for registering and tallying votes for November's municipal elections, (which are widely seen as a mid-term plebisite on the Durate administration). The TSJE Public Affairs Director, Liliana Benitez, told PolOff October 17 that the TSJE would be using both paper ballots and electronic ballots. Some Departments will be split 50 percent to 50 percent using both methods, while some jurisdictions will either rely 100 percent on electronic balloting or 100 percent on paper ballots. PolOff acquired a document October 20 outlining the distribution: 14 of Paraguay's 17 Departments will use both 50-50, while only 3 (the least populated) will be 100 percent electronic balloting. (COMMENT: November 19 is shaping up to be a long night of vote counting. In the two most recent (all electronic) internal party elections in 2006 the votes were counted and authenticated on election day. Benitez was pessimistic about the TSJE being able to rapidly count and authenticate this election, however, with work likely continuing into the early hours of the next day. END COMMENT).

EXPORT POTENTIAL

¶5. (U) The Ambassador and the USAID Director visited October 24-25 several USAID-assisted businesses in the Departments of Caaguazu and Guaira, including firms that produce sesame, ethanol, and high-quality hand-crafted clothing and linens (A'o poi). Paraguay's exports of sesame now represent 44 percent of Japan's market, with good potential to expand exports to other countries with demand, including the U.S. A clean fuel ethanol company has increased sales by more than 20 percent thanks to USAID assistance creating more jobs and increasing income for sugar cane workers who supply the

company. USAID has also assisted the A'o poi industry, perhaps best known for shirts that breathe (and some might say look) better than the famous Guayaberas. A'o poi benefits thousands of people, including many women who are skilled in its unique art of embroidery.

SAFETY AWARENESS

¶6. (U) This week USAID and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) signed an agreement with the Paraguayan Ministries of Education, and National Emergencies to provide increased safety awareness at schools throughout the country.

Under the agreement USAID/OFDA will provide technical assistance, training, and some logistical support for the training of 2000 school teachers nationwide. Paraguay's interest in building safety and emergency responsiveness peaked in 2004 when a tragic fire at an Asuncion resulted in the death of more than 400 who were senselessly trapped inside the complex. The criminal trial of the owners of the supermarket is ongoing. Widespread coverage was given this week to the U.S. ATF's forensic determination that many fire exit doors had been padlocked shut.

CUTTING-EDGE CODE OF ETHICS

¶7. (U) Argentine Justice Rodolfo Vigo, the General Secretary of the Ibero-American Commission for Ethics in Justice, recently hailed the Paraguayan Judicial Code of Ethics as the most advanced in Ibero-America. Justice Vigo supported his statement by mentioning that the Paraguayan Judicial Code of Ethics is unique because of its implementation mechanism (a fully staffed and trained Ethics Office) and sanctioning bodies (Tribunal and Council) independent from the Supreme Court justices. The Paraguayan Code is now being used as a model around the region, with both Justice Vigo and the Director of the Code of Ethics in Paraguay crediting USAID support for this achievement.

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